

SAINT CATHERINE OF SIENA

forward man, not without learning, he was, perhaps, the most practical member of the fellowship.

It was probably through Ser Cristofano that a more important personage was brought into Catherine's sphere of influence : the painter and democratic politician, Andrea di Vanni. Andrea di Vanni had taken part in the revolutionary movement that had brought about the supremacy of the Riformatori, and was a man of weight in the counsels of the new magistrates of the Republic, much employed in important embassies. He was intimate with the worthy notary, and stood godfather to his eldest son. There is no reason for supposing that he actually became one of Catherine's spiritual family, and her letters to him, written when he was filling the office of Captain of the People, are of a later date. He was a loyal and conscientious politician according to the lights of his day, and a virile painter, with a noble and striking ideal of the Blessed Virgin in his art.¹ The most important of his surviving Works is the large altar-piece in the church of Santo Stefano, on the Lizza ; but, restored and repainted though it be, he would be graceless indeed who could look unmoved upon that strange, unearthly, almost uncouth, but immeasurably touching and appealing portrait of Catherine from his hand that still watches over the Cappella delle Volte in San Domenico.

That a young woman should thus be surrounded with men, some of them no older than herself, gave food to cynical thoughts and slanderous tongues. The bitterest of all accusations for Catherine to bear was made against her. A woman named

and Grottanelli, *Oraziemi di Santa Brigida* (Siena, 1867), p. 4. Cristofano wrote a life of Giovanni Colombini, translated Catherine's *Dialog*) into Latin, and had an Italian version of the *Revelations* of St. Bridget copied for the Confraternity of Our Lady.

¹ Cf. F. M. Perkins, *Andrea fanni*, in the *BurRngton Magazine*, vol. ii. (London, 1903). He seems to have called himself "Andrea di Vanni," Vanni becoming a family name in later times. Various documents concerning his public life, with certain of his letters to the Signoria when ambassador to the Pope (1373» 1384, 1385), are given by G. Milanesi, *Documenti per la Storia dell' Arte Senfstf* vol. i. docs. 90-95, 137, and Borghesi and Banchi, *Nuovi documentt*, pp. »7» 54, 55-